

Andrew Jackson to Willie Blount, February 15, 1810, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO WILLIE BLOUNT.¹

1 Copy. Willie Blount succeeded Sevier as governor, in 1809, and continued in office until 1815. His reply to Jackson, Mar. 15, 1810, was complaisant, but there is no evidence that any serious attempt was made to adopt Jackson's suggestions. Gov. Blount's baptismal name was pronounced "Wiley", a common usage in North Carolina where he was born, e. g., Willie Jones, and Willie P. Mangum.

Hermitage, February 15, 1810

Dear Sir . your letter of the first of this instant is before me and it will aford me pleasure to comply with the request, I would herewith inclose to you the returns from the differrent Brigades composing my Division in 1809 which at one glance would shew you the state and condition thereof and from which you would discover that there is a great deficiency of arms and acoutrements. But presumeing, that these returns you will find at the seat of Goverment in the office of the adjutant Genl, of the state, or amonghst the archives which were handed over to you by your predesessor—I omit inclosing them. It is certainly true that at a time like the present great attention ought to be paid to the decipline of the militia—they ought to be in readiness to act. But Sir under the laws of our State the militia never will be diciplined, the[y] never can, and it appears, that as danger approaches the less attention is paid to this all important subject to the Defence of our country by Congress who alone can pass efficient laws to difuse dicipline amonghst us and which will give us a uniform militia throughout the union. before the militia under our state regulations can be diciplined, the mode pointed out by the county for the election of officers must

Library of Congress

be changed. Without this, proper subordination never will be maintained amongst the militia—hence no discipline. This is the first change, that must be effected—next to this the[y] must be classed (and as you have asked my opinion on the most proper plan of classification I will here give it) first I would class the militia into two classes only the first class should be from the age of 18 to 28 inclusive second from 28 to 40. The first class should be the first for duty. This class would form an army too numerous for any one requisition from the genl Government upon the state. I would then divide this first class, into as many divisions as it would admit of, to meet the demands of the general government on any case of emergency that might occur, this could be easily known from the number of militia required by the laws of the union 16 to be held in readiness to act at the call of the President. When this was done at the expence of the Publick compleat camp equipage should be furnished for the number in the first class for duty, which first class should be held in readiness for service for one year in case during that time there should be a call after such classification this first class should be ordered into the field and there cantooned at given points, placed under the directions of officers appointed by government competent to discipline both officers and men for the space of two months from the date of their arrival at the place of rendezvous at which Period the[y] should be dismissed (unless their service[s] should be required, against an enemy) and would carry with them amongst their fellow citizens the knowledge of the discipline they had acquired—and when dismissed the second class should be called on and undergo the same routine of discipline under the same drill officers as the first class etc. etc. until the whole of the first class shall be Thus disciplined and assured to the duties of the field. When they are dismissed and intermet with their fellow citizens again the[y] will carry with them a knowledge of Tactics that they can difuse throughout our fellow citizens, will raise a military ardor, throughout the country and stimulate others to vie with them in the knowledge and art of war. But this I know will be objected to because it will occasion expence. To which I answer—our independence and Liberty was not obtained without expence. It was dearly Bought—both with Blood and Treasure, It must be preserved. the pence on this subject never should be counted—and its only real and substantial defence

Library of Congress

is a well organized militia—and we can not we find from experience have this without expence. From the scenes of corruption, that has lately been discovered in the genl of our regular army, the ideas contained in the constitution is verified, that the sure defence and Bulwork of our Liberty is in a well organized militia. I would also advise that every three years, the militia should be classed and thus diciplined. this will always keep ready for duty, the young and healthy part of our citizens who will be able to undergo any hardship or fatigue and keep our militia in a proper state of discipline; laws well calculated to inforce subordination. When thus introduced by the dicipline of the first class for duty it can be kept up and every three years being classed the rising youths, will become diciplined on cases of amergency, our State in a verry few years could furnish an army sufficent to face any enemy that could be introduced by an invading foe. If this plan or any similar should be adopted, it will at once present to your view the necessity of our state or the general Goverment supplying the militia with arms and accoutrements. our state possesses fine raw materials for an army it only requires a little manufactory, to be able if necessary to oppose with success Boneparts invincibles, but to do this with success, it will require two things, first *dicipline* second arms, to carry into execution, all the benefits of dicipline. But to shew you, the military a[r]dor, that prevades my Division I inclose you Genl James Winchesters Report to me under my last order under the requisition of the genl Goverment the Detachment was filled on short notice by voluntary enlistment. But Sir the frequent calls for the militia by the Genl Goverment, without action is well calculated to destroy the military ardor that has prevailed and which I still hope exists. It has frequently Brought to my mind the fable of the wolf and the Shepard, and the Temporising Spirit that appears to prevade Congress under passing insulting and degrading scenes, convince me, that let the pulse of the nation be what it may congress will try to paralise it. the nation possessing a proper dignity of feeling for the many degradations and insults our goverment has reed the[y] are ripe for war but congress is temporising. But I will do my duty and aid you in maturing any plan to dicipline the militia, which when well organized, may emphatically be stiled the sure Bullwork, and defence of the nation. I am yours with respect